

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) An electric power steering apparatus comprising:

a ball nut rotationally driven by an electric motor and having a female thread groove formed in ~~the~~ an inner periphery thereof;

~~a rack shaft disposed through said ball nut on the axis thereof and having a male thread groove se-formed in its~~ an outer periphery thereof so as to face to the female thread groove;

a plurality of circulation balls interposed between the female thread groove and the male thread groove;

a housing ~~for~~ holding said ball nut rotatably; and

a fastening element ~~for~~ fixing said ball nut to said housing,

wherein said electric power steering apparatus is provided with fall-out preventing means for preventing said fastening element from falling out within said housing.

3. (Currently Amended) An electric power steering apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said housing ~~is constructed of~~ includes a first housing accommodating said ball nut and said fastening element, and a second housing fixed to said first housing, and

said fall-out preventing means ~~is~~ includes a fastening element contact member, formed on said second housing, ~~for regulating~~ and disposed to block movement of said fastening element in a ~~from moving in the fall-out~~ direction.

4. (Currently Amended) An electric power steering apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said fastening element is a stopper ring fitted to said first housing, and

an interval between said stopper ring and said fastening element contact member is, ~~in an assembled state,~~ set smaller than a thickness of said stopper ring.

5. (Currently Amended) An electric power steering apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said fastening element is a ring bolt helically fitted to said first housing, and

an interval between said ring bolt and said fastening element contact member is, ~~in an assembled state,~~ set smaller than an effective helical-fitting length of said ring bolt to said first housing.

Claims 6-8 (Cancelled)

9. (New) An electric power steering apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said ball nut includes a ball nut body formed with said female thread groove and a double-row angular ball bearing fitted on said ball nut body, said double-row angular ball bearing having an outer race fitted to an inner periphery of said first housing and fastened by said fastening element.

10. (New) An electric power steering apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said fastening element is a stopper ring fitted to said first housing, and

an interval between said stopper ring and said fastening element contact member is set smaller than a thickness of said stopper ring.

11. (New) An electric power steering apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said fastening element is a ring bolt helically fitted to said first housing, and

an interval between said ring bolt and said fastening element contact member is set smaller than an effective helical-fitting length of said ring bolt to said first housing.

12. (New) An electric power steering apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said ball nut includes a ball nut body formed with said female thread groove and a double-row angular ball bearing fitted on said ball nut body, said double-row angular ball bearing having an outer race fitted to an inner periphery of said housing and fastened by said fastening element.